

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held Tuesday, January 5, 2021, at 6:15 p.m., in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor Joseph Fawbush presiding.

Present: Joseph Fawbush, Delores Belcher, Robert Fultz, Jr., Mark Caruso, and William Mays

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, Jeffery L. Shupe, Finance Director

The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Fultz and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Police Chief James Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to adopt the minutes of the December 1, 2020, meeting as presented.

There was no response to the Mayor's Call for Visitors.

Included in council packets for consideration was a request from Norton City Schools for a supplemental appropriation for a security grant match.

Mr. Ramey told council that during the 2020 budget process the school system informed council that the division would be applying for a security grant and would require a local match if the school was awarded the grant. He said the school system was recently informed of the grant award and Norton City School Superintendent Dr. Gina Wohlford was present to discuss the grant details and the local match requirement.

Dr. Wohlford said that the security grant totaled \$179,961 and will allow for the upgrade all the 44 outdoor and 16 indoor video cameras at John I. Burton High School. She stated that this will complete the camera upgrades at both schools and next year the school system will be applying for a lesser dollar amount. Dr. Wohlford said the city's local match was \$44,990.25.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to appropriate \$44,990.25 from unappropriated reserves to provide the local match for the security grant awarded to Norton City Schools.

In their packets, council received a request from the Commissioner of the Revenue to refund erroneously assessed 2020 personal property taxes. The refund, in the amount of \$393.40, is due to Toyota Lease Trust because the vehicle was not leased as of January 1, 2020.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to approve the refund to Toyota Lease Trust, 20 Commerce Way, Suite 800, Woburn, MA, in the amount of \$393.40.

The next agenda item was an update on the number of COVID-19 cases in the area, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and city administration's plans moving forward.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, the city manager provided council with an update on the trend of the total number of COVID-19 cases within the city, and he noted that the Virginia Department of Health now provides localities with COVID-19 vaccine information. Mr. Ramey

stated that the Commonwealth had received 451,075 does of the COVID-19 vaccine and that 131 citizens had received the vaccine.

Next Mr. Ramey provided council with a history of the funding and expenditures pertaining to Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and city administration's plans moving forward. He said that city administration recently learned that Congress extended the deadline for incurring expenses related to the COVID-19 from December 30, 2020, to December 31, 2021. Mr. Ramey said the new extension will have little impact on the city except for expending the remaining \$32,000 prior to the December 31, 2021 deadline. Mr. Ramey said the majority of the city's expenditures included partner organizations such as Norton City Schools, Norton Rescue Squad, Family Crisis Support Services, Wise County Food Bank, Norton Industrial Development Authority, and Wise County Circuit Court Clerk and that \$525,017 in CARES Act funding has been shared with these partner organizations.

Next, Mr. Ramey updated council on the regional LENOWISCO Small Business Recovery Assistance Program (LENOWISCO SBRAP) that includes the counties of Lee, Scott, and Wise, and the City of Norton. He said the city was the fiscal agent for the program and that a grant totaling \$1.6 million was awarded to LENOWISCO SBRAP. Mr. Ramey stated that there are three rounds of funding and so far the city has drawn down \$1,147,080 of which Norton businesses are estimated to have received \$273,380. He said the deadline for Round 3 funding closed on January 8th and city administration is awaiting the processing of paperwork to draw down the remaining funds.

The city manager informed council that city administration applied for CARES Act funding under the Municipal Utility Relief Program and had received \$49,294.62. He explained that the program was created to assist municipal utility customers experiencing economic hardship due to COVID-19 and are in arrears on their utilities. Mr. Ramey said there is a timeframe for the utility arrearage and that customers' late bills must fall within that timeframe to qualify. He said the city has advertised the relief program on the city's website and social media and that 49 applications have been received to date.

Councilman Caruso stated that city administration and staff have done an absolutely marvelous job taking care of the city and partnering with others to keep businesses and citizens supported during this coronavirus pandemic.

Included on the agenda for council consideration was the Annual Commonwealth of Virginia Holiday Calendar as published on January 1, 2021.

Mr. Ramey advised that several years ago council adopted the State Holiday Schedule for employees and it has worked very well and each year council confirms the annual holiday schedule.

After a brief discussion and upon a motion by Councilman Mays, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to approve the State Holiday Schedule as published on January 1, 2021.

Also included in packets for council consideration was a check to Norton Industrial Development Authority, dated October 9, 2020, in the amount of \$131,250 for transfer of CARES Act funding.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, council moved to confirm the check to Norton Industrial Development Authority, as stated above.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Mays, and passed by the following roll call vote: YES – Fultz, Mays, Belcher, Caruso, and Fawbush, NO – None, ABSENT – None, council moved to go into closed meeting for Personnel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia, as amended, and Section 2.2-3711 (A) (3) of the Code of Virginia for Discussion or Consideration of the Acquisition of Real Property for a Public Purpose, or of the Disposition of Publicly Held Real Property, Where Discussion in an Open Meeting would Adversely Affect the Bargaining Position or Negotiating Strategy of the Public Body.

Mayor Fawbush declared council in closed meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fultz, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to go back into open meeting.

Mayor Fawbush declared council back in open meeting.

The clerk polled each member of council as to the Certification of Closed Meeting with each answering yes. The clerk then read a Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilwoman Belcher, seconded by Councilman Caruso, and passed by unanimous vote, council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

In comments from the city manager:

Mr. Ramey said he underestimated the turnout for the Santa Station and the excitement it generated, but traffic flowed well on Market Street and the city received positive reactions. He said over 200 bags of candy were distributed.

The city manager said the new ambulance, which is being purchased using CARES Act funding through a partnership with Wise County, is expected to be picked up this week.

He told council that Statements of Economic Interest are due back to Clerk Rebecca Coffey by February 1st.

Mr. Ramey told council he provided for review copies of the latest financial statement and Retail Sales Tax Report. He then provided members with a Summary of City Council Highlights for 2020, and said he hopes to have the administrative highlights completed by the January 19th meeting.

The following comments were made by council members:

Councilman Fultz asked the city manager for an update on Project Intersection.

Mr. Ramey said the project is nearing completion and we are expecting a bid opening to sell the first seam of coal next week. He stated that two blasts will be held this week and the project is expected to be completed in January. Mr. Ramey said grass will be planted in April and the utility drawings are being designed to go out to bid in February. He said there are discussions regarding harvesting the second seam of coal, but that would level the tract of land with U.S. 23 so city administration is discussing with the Division of Mines Minerals and Energy (DMME) and the engineers.

Councilman Fultz said he noticed the city Christmas tree and that he is looking forward to the tree being raised 8 feet next year.

Councilman Fultz asked the city manager if Rural King owned property in the city. Mr. Ramey said he has not had any formal discussions with anyone and I have not seen a deed. Mr.

Ramey added that the portion of the old Wal-Mart property at the Virginia-Kentucky Regional Shopping Center has been separated and sold.

Councilman Fultz said he met with LENOWISCO Health Department representatives and they will be providing COVID-19 vaccinations on Mondays and Tuesdays at the City Center and LENOWISCO will begin advertising on Monday, January 11th.

Councilman Mays praised all the emergency workers and city employees for the extra precautions they are having to take during these trying times and noted that they are doing a fantastic job.

Councilman Caruso echoed Councilman Mays comments regarding the city's first responders and stated that they are doing a fantastic job.

He noted that the city had a broken sewer line and that the city's Transmission and Distribution Department (T&D) had done a great job repairing the line in the inclement weather.

Councilman Caruso stated the Christmas event was awesome and that they drove their grandson by the Santa Station two or three times and that he really enjoyed it. Hopefully, we can do the event again next year, he added.

Mr. Caruso asked the city manager on his presentation chart if he could overlay the number of daily COVID-19 cases so it can give council a better perspective.

Mr. Ramey said he could provide that graph for council.

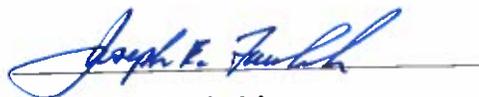
Mayor Fawbush said goodbye to 2020 and that he is proud of everything that was accomplished in 2020. He said everyone is to be commended for the projects that were completed.

He said he is looking forward to 2021 and the building of the Destination Center and the new sidewalk that will be installed from downtown to the center. He is excited for the completion of downtown and other projects that are in the works and he noted that it would be exciting next year to have a tenant in the Project Intersection facility.

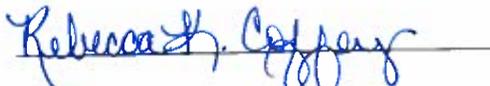
Mayor Fawbush commented that Southwest Virginia lost a great advocate for our area with the passing of Senator Ben Chaffin. He asked that everyone keep the Chaffin family in their thoughts and prayers.

There being no further business to come before council, Mayor Fawbush declared the meeting adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA


Joseph Fawbush, Mayor

ATTEST:


Rebecca K. Coffey, Clerk of Council